

HIDDEN POISON AND BODY OF ERROR (1)

An editorial by Reuel Lemmons, in Firm Foundation, Sept. 3, 1963, p. 562

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Elsewhere in this issue appears the first of three installments of Brother Ketcherside's attempt to deal with the doctrinal objections to his new teaching which appeared in the Firm Foundation, June 11. Our review of his answer to the June 4 article appeared last week.

Brother Ketcherside has not met the requirements to get his material into the Firm Foundation, but lest he have excuse, we are running it anyway. He does not answer the arguments we presented; he does not meet our rebuttal of his positions. His is no "reply to objections"; he simply restates his position in most cases, and thus uses this means to get his views before our readers.

We shall substantiate our former charge that Brother Ketcherside (1) stands in direct contradiction to the Scriptures, (2) that his writings contain a body of error, and (3) that they contain hidden poison. It is evident that in the brief space allotted here we cannot deal with all he has said and taught, but rather, can simply point out the basic errors, leaving those interested to make a more detailed search of available material. Read his article, then this reply.

1. *"Brother K teaches that the grace of God is wider than the authority of Christ, and that many will be saved by the grace of God who have never submitted to the authority of Christ."* Please note carefully that Brother K does not deny this charge; he rather admits it. Note the statement: "It is my opinion that some *may be saved* who have done all they know to do, but have never learned about Jesus or have been honestly mistaken about some of his requirements." Here is the body of error and the hidden poison. In various writings he has made it more strong than a "may be saved." Millions of Buddhists have "done all they know to do, but have never learned about Jesus . . ." Will they be saved? Why send a missionary to any people on earth if they have a hope of salvation based upon doing "all they know to do, but have never learned about Jesus"? The man's position nullifies the great commission.

Consider this: if those may be saved who have been honestly mistaken about some of his (Jesus) requirements, does this mean that a sprinkled person, because he is honestly mistaken about Jesus' requirement for baptism "may be saved"? God's grace is limited by God's word. Jehovah has in no place indicated that his grace extends beyond his word. His grace is extended only through Christ (1 Tim. 2:1). Apart from Him there is no grace (Gal. 5:4). When the Brother says that "some may be saved who have done all they know to do, but have never learned about Jesus," he is in direct contradiction to the Scriptures.

Another poisonous thing about this position is that it denies that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus, and injects instead the poisonous thought that God gave Jesus only partial authority and that God's grace may still be administered outside of, and in circumvention of, the authority of Christ. This is in direct contradiction to Mark 16:15. The

very question the Brother asks: "What is poisonous about this position?" indicates just how poisonous it is. He does not share this position with the pioneers of the restoration movement. They never held it.

2. *"Brother K makes a distinction between 'the Gospel' and 'doctrine' which*

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is foreign to the Bible." Please note carefully that again Brother Ketcherside does not answer, but rather affirms the charge. He seems to be asking space in the Firm Foundation, not to answer the charges but to get his views before our readers. We reply that this position also (1) contains a body of error, (2) contains hidden poison, and (3) is contrary to the Scriptures.

He is in error because he makes distinctions the Bible does not make. It was pointed out in our June 11 article that K teaches that "gospel" is preached only to aliens, and "doctrine" only to the church, and, furthermore, that "baptism is neither gospel nor doctrine, but, rather, a 'medial line' between the two." These are distinctions which the Scriptures do not make. Jesus preached doctrine to aliens (Matt. 7:28). Peter filled Jerusalem (aliens) with doctrine (Acts 5:28), and Paul preached doctrine to the aliens on Cyprus (Acts 13:12). On the other hand, Paul commended the Roman brethren (saints) to "Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel" (Rom. 16:25), and told these "saints" that he was "eager to preach the gospel to you also" It is freely admitted that the word gospel sometimes refers to the message preached to aliens, but the word gospel has no such narrow limitations as Brother Ketcherside places upon it. His article tries to sidestep the former charge that he makes baptism neither a part of the gospel nor of doctrine. Brethren should well remember that Ketcherside's doctrine divorces baptism from both gospel and doctrine. According to him one can and does obey the gospel without baptism and before baptism.

The body of error contained in this doctrine is obvious. The passages that teach that the gospel saves and that we are saved by the gospel are too numerous to mention. If baptism is no part of the gospel then baptism is not connected with salvation. This very contention is responsible for the many veiled references in his writings and speeches to the possible salvation of unbaptized aliens.

The poison hidden here is more clearly demonstrated by a quotation from a speech Brother K delivered at the North American Christian Convention (Christian Church) recently held in Long Beach, California. He was speaking of "the unity of all those who believe in Him." Of them he said, "Observe that it is a universal unity. It involves all those who accept the testimony of the apostles. These were the divinely chosen and qualified witnesses. Those who reject their words do not truly believe in Jesus at all." In various places in his speeches and writings he has left the impression that this belief is the broader belief held by every sectarian in the world, rather than the belief that includes implicit obedience. It is on the basis of this broad belief that he says that they, at that point, become the "sons of God and my brothers in prospect." We do not believe for a minute that if the audience on Pentecost had not asked Peter what to do, and had not been told to be baptized, they would have had

the whole gospel preached to them. Ketcherside thinks they would have had the whole gospel. Without the terms of pardon they would have had no good news at all. Brother Ketcherside robs the gospel of the very thing that makes it the gospel when he removes from the gospel the essential condition of pardon. That's hidden poison.

2. (sic). "*He teaches that after one has been made a child of God he may make all sorts of errors concerning doctrines, but none of these, regardless of how grievous, except for denying the Deity of Jesus Christ, can be made a basis for withdrawal of fellowship.*" Please note carefully that again Brother Ketcherside does not answer, but rather affirms the charge. Note that he says, "Only by renouncing that lordship through denial of Jesus in word or conduct is that fellowship broken." Only a denial of Jesus breaks fellowship! This teaching is in direct contradiction to such scriptures as Eph. 5:5-6 wherein Paul promises the wrath of God upon the basis of disobedience rather than the denial of Jesus' divinity, which is the only basis upon which Brother K says disfellowship can come. God promised to remove the candlestick of Ephesus (Rev. 2:2-5) for

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lack of love. He promised dire vengeance upon Thyatira (Rev. 2:19-23) for false doctrine. Yet these things K teaches are no basis for breaking the fellowship.

Herein is hidden the poison: If Ketcherside's teaching dealt only with opinions, the holding of which caused no man to sin, he would have some ground. But when he becomes so liberal he teaches that even false doctrines which lead multitudes to sin are no grounds for disfellowship he is too liberal. God promises to break fellowship with men over false doctrines, but Ketcherside promises not to. If his position were true then Paul wasted breath in warning the elders of Ephesus about leading away disciples after them by their teaching of perverse things. Brother K, it was not their party spirit but their teaching of perverse things that caused them to lead away disciples after them. In each of the three points covered this week we believe it is clear that Brother K's new doctrine (1) stands in direct contradiction to the Scriptures, (2) contains a body of error, and (3) contains hidden poison. Brethren can see that our difference with Ketcherside is as basic and as fundamental as the Plan of Salvation. This is no hair-splitting proposition.
